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LAND AND SEA PIECES

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LAND AND SEA PIECES: POEMS

By ARTHUR E. J. LEGGE



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LAND AND SEA PIECES

LA JEUNE FILLE

I WATCHED you lead your dogs across the lawn,—

A wave of sympathetic tails and noses,—

You moved—in hackneyed language—like a fawn,

And—true to the convention—gathered roses,

Romped with your canine court, began to sing,

Threw down your hat, and disarranged your
tresses,—

In fact were just the well-known winsome thing

A jaded world pokes laughter at—and blesses.

And I, your old tormentor, will proceed

To persecute you sore with mock compassion

Because artistic pedants change their creed,
And you are altogether out of fashion.

You used to be the poet's foremost theme,
The leading part in plays, the note of novels,
Now you are nothing but a schoolboy's dream
Or idol at whose feet some dotard grovels.

Our modern taste cries out for stronger food,
And you, my dear, are merely bread-and-butter,—
Art interrogative explores the nude,
Draws back the curtain, and unbars the shutter,

Examines, probes, dissects,—and, right or wrong,
We show you things they did not show your
mother,

Nor suffer bright delusions very long,—
Oh, I am just as bad as any other,

And scorn to whisper underneath my breath

Aught that I take for truth, however cheerless,

Believing pain or pleasure, life or death

Can teach one doctrine only—to be fearless.

Moreover there is nothing strange or new

When age meridian waxes sentimental

Before a fair young innocent, like you,—

Such aberrations are but incidental.

And yet you are so delicately sweet,

With your wide sea-blue eyes, remotely serious

Through all their laughter, with your lips that meet

In lines firm, pleading, joyful, sad, mysterious,

With your quaint eyebrows and your thick, soft
hair,

Your slender, graceful form, and all the wonder

Of that pale half-transparent rose-bloom where

Your cream-white skin shows the blood moving
under,

That suddenly the laughing mask is torn

With fierce power from me, while, abashed and
lowly,

I seem to hear reproachful voices borne

On faint winds breathing through a temple
holy,

And all the haunting secret of your face,

The spiritual burden, ghostly splendour,

Drive out my wanton thoughts, and in their place

Passionless love grows, mystic, humble, tender,

Till I would almost change my whole life's plan,

Renounce my conscience, let my creed be shaken,

No longer search the absorbing riddle man,
Nor toil for honest truth—howe'er mistaken—

If only what I write the privilege won
Of shaping your pure dreams, of building stronger
That fairy palace reared against the sun
The world yet holds for you,—for me no longer.

Ah yes, though loaded years of joy and pain
Winnow my hopes, my softer fibres harden,
Call me to mountain-rocks above the plain,
Or wilderness beyond the sheltered garden,

Spite of the surging undertones below
The homelier triumph of life's orchestration,
To be your laureate I could almost go,
Apostate, to poetical damnation.

OLIVIA'S GARDEN

OLIVIA's Garden !—Shakespeare weave

Thy brief enchantment longer ; hold
Unbarred the gates of make-believe
For grown-up children, wearied, old.

The chime of rhythmic language ends,
The radiant lovers link and pass,
One moment, ere the baize descends,
Leaves the clown piping on the grass,

Then all is over. Yet the stream
Of light and laughter round me brings
No rude deliverance from the dream
That fans my soul with fairy wings,

As through the jostling throng I press

Towards the play-house door, and glide
Into the crowded loneliness

Of London's homeward-rolling tide.

Still, in the garden of my thought,

Exemplars of eternal youth
Are breathing words of passion fraught
With ancient, elemental truth.

I hear triumphant love declare

Faith whose perfection purifies
The allurements of a woman's hair,
The mocking mystery in her eyes.

I view that unforgotten land

Of early fancies where Love rules,
And commonplace is contraband,—
A perfect paradise of fools,—

And sharply cruel comes a thrust
Of eager longing,—half regret,—
To know that under all the dust
The lantern may be burning yet,
That sympathetic sexual choice
May bear the value poets claim,—
All life being else an idle voice,—
A painted film,—a shade,—a name,—
While true love round enfolded souls
Weaves lightly such a silken mesh
That guardian happiness controls
Each changeful passion of the flesh.
All are but dreams, so let me take
This best and fairest dream for true,—
Life paying, for one soul's pure sake,
To Love perpetual revenue,

And faithful hearts, unused to tire

Of that one tax, nor levying toll

On provinces of chance desire,

Who keep the ethereal compact whole.

An out-blown lamp the vision dies,

Slain by the power that brought it birth,—

The pleading gaze of women's eyes,—

The rippling music of their mirth.

I watch no garden, hear no tones

Of love melodious, but awake

To tread the grimy paving-stones

Whereon the shattered billows break

From that discoloured, quivering sea

Of women, whose white womanhood

Has sold its fragrance for the fee

Of lustful pleasure, ruthless blood.

Wan is the softness of their smile,
 Their voices lack the true caress,
They claim no homage, but beguile,
 With grim, commercial earnestness,
Experienced man and fledgling boy
 To sensual feasts of low delight,—
Strange vestals of unlovely joy,
 High priestesses of appetite.

With faint pain biting at my heart,
 I break from your lascivious throng,
My scape-goat sisters, kept apart
 To chant the fleshly syren-song,

To give the grossness of our world
 A play-ground,—till it changes form,
And you to outer darkness hurled,
 Appease the prayerful, prurient storm.

Olivia's Garden !—Must we hold

Such gardens purchased with the price
Of goods in yonder market sold,—

A Minotaurian sacrifice,—

Or may we shun the tragic mind,

And lightly count the accustomed shame,
Reckoning that all womankind

Have found realities the same,

That, deck or daub it how we will,

With woven flowers or plastered mud,
The central fact is constant still,

Mere harvest-growth of flesh and blood ?

Look how the golden globes of light

Make jewelled clusters through the dark
Vague space where gas-lamps gleam so bright
Across the hushed, deserted Park !

Surely, for those with eyes to see,

The arrowy rays that bend and dance
Are infinite in their mystery,

And eloquent with all romance.

For light is light from lamp or sun,

Fresh beauty blooms from worse decay,
To the great river, one by one,

The trickling gutters find their way.

Yet where the house-piled barrier ends

At the white archway, yon festoon
Vulgarly luminant offends

Before the unearthly April moon,

That lies with cold, pure face serene

Enthroned above the naked boughs,—
Pale emblem of what might have been,
Bride unrevealed our hearts espouse.

And in the silent darkness there,

Where silvery veils of moonlight fall,

My spirit looks to find, somewhere,

Olivia's garden, after all.

HORTON

MILTON lived here !—The word suggests

A fund of observations trite,

Such as the mild scholastic breasts

Where platitudes are welcome guests

Would fain invite.

And we, unqualified to claim

Superior mental rank bestowed,

May talk, with no pedantic shame

Of what might happen if he came

Along this road,

And joined us in our walk without
Our knowing who he was, and cast
The lightning of his brain about
Our topics, as he did, no doubt,
In days long past,

When someone, on his homeward way
To Staines or Datchet, overtook
The rambling scholar, by the grey
Mysterious twilight charmed to lay
Aside his book,

And lured him into chance discourse
Of daily trifles,—this and that,—
Of rabbits under yonder gorse,
Of yearling heifer, half-bred horse,
And such-like chat,

And left him, just as we should do,
 With all his greatness undiscerned,
And thought him rather good to view,
But dull and solemn,—never knew
 The light that burned

Behind the beautiful, austere
 Young face, the puritanic garb,
The language classical and clear,
That sometimes wounded with severe
 Sarcastic barb.

For Milton was but ill-advised
 To climb Parnassus ere the brood
Oracular had criticised,—
Unparagraphed, unadvertised,
 Uninterviewed.

No printed wisdom bade him wear

The crown, and yet he hardly sought
For approbation anywhere

Beyond himself, and did not care

What people thought,

But wandered here through field and grove

Forgetful of the world at times,

Searched his great dreams, and only strove

To please his conscience when he wove

Immortal rhymes.

These fields are haunted: over all

Broods the vague sense of things unseen,

Of harmonies whose rise and fall

He heard, whose whispers yet recall

That which has been.

The landscape bears but common fame,—
Flat English meads, whose homelike views
In Milton's time were much the same,
Yet out of them the voices came
That stirred his Muse.

When sunset reared a crown of fire
On Windsor's line of woodland there,
His thoughts were as a chanting choir,
He played, with language for his lyre,
A wondrous air.

When marsh-born vapours rose around
He gave them shapes we shall not see ;
He gathered from this pasture-ground
Orchestral notes whereon to found
A symphony.

His murmured music robbed the lark,
And stole the blackbird's evening thrill,
And echoed, to the distant Park,
Each nightingale when oaks were dark
On Cooper's Hill.

For him the river wafted down
The tones of a majestic creed
From Eton, with her scholar's gown,
By yellow sedge and bulrush brown
To Runnymede.

Old guardian Castle, throned on high
Above your timbered slopes afar !
You stand against the western sky
A symbol, binding days gone by
With days which are.

Plantagenet and Tudor strode

Along your terraces ; the flower
Of martial courtliness abode
Behind your battlements, and rode
With pomp and power

Through Horton's ancient hamlet, sure
Of recognition, homage, praise,
While one was dwelling there obscure
Whose laurels through the years endure
Beyond *their* bays.

Yes, though your feudal aspect brings
The ghost of earthly greatness near,—
Courtiers, and trumpeters, and Kings,
And parasites, and other things,—
Milton lived *here*.

THE DEATH-MASK OF LEOPARDI

WITHIN this outworn shell

A fragment torn from the universal Soul

Was dungeoned for a while,—a sword too keen

For carnal sheath's control,

Shaped, branded, tempered in the fires of Hell,—

And we, whose faith proclaims that all is well,

Ask why the thing has been.

God! But it wrings the heart

To ponder such a life;—a brain on fire

With that which makes great poets,—with wide

thought

And infinite desire

And shy wild passion roaming far apart

In unfamiliar solitudes of Art,—

Tortured and over-wrought

By this corporeal cloak

That, like the tainted robe of Nessus, wrung

With agonies the wearer, made his song

The saddest ever sung,

Where earthly life becomes a cruel joke,

The load of an intolerable yoke,

The hopeless reign of Wrong.

Poor martyred child of grief !

They say there was a sweetness in your smile

That showed how love broke through your bitterness.

And though degraded, vile

Men looked too often, yet your unbelief

Gleaned from their stubble souls a tiny sheaf

Of those you had to bless,

Mis-shapen, frail, diseased,
You crawled along life's highway, wondering
How men could name existence a good gift,
When all it seemed to bring
Was pleasure's counterfeit that never pleased,
And fugitive delight that none quite seized,
And sympathies adrift.

Yet was not your despair
All barren ashes or unfertile sand,
But proved a very fruitful garden soil,
That yielded to your hand
A wealth of bloom so wonderful that ne'er
With tears and blood was watered anywhere
A nobler field of toil.

This put the balance straight.
A soul, beyond our nature sensitive,

With more than human suffering hammered out

White hot the words that live.

Surely you paid the price, however great,

With secret understanding of your fate

Though anguish cried in doubt.

That heart, which knew no joy,

Won power o'er countless hearts it soared above.

That weary mouth no woman ever kissed,

Though hungering for love,

Poured out the language lovers yet employ

To shape their thoughts in music ; girl and boy

Learn from you notes you missed.

Passion is born of pain

And pain of passion,—so things intertwine.

You, to tormenting fires of genius doomed,

Thereby grew half-divine,

For all which clogged the beating of your brain,
Futilities of pleasure, sensual, vain,
Were in that glow consumed.

And yet who knows?—who knows?
I wonder is there anything so good
As this world's rarely granted fruits,—by you
Scarce touched or understood.
Could all your gifts outclass the gain of those
Whose car triumphant down the broad way goes,
Bathed in delight like dew?

Could all your dreams afford
Aught to compare with passion's coldest kiss,
Or one brief hour upon a woman's breast?
And is there any bliss,
High on some snowy mental mountain stored,

Like that wild kingdom's joy where Youth is lord
And Laughter makes her nest ?

Ah, let me conquer doubt !
To suffer and to sorrow more than most
Has been the poet's privilege through all time,
To leave the vulgar host
Who follow Comus in unlovely rout,
And search through that dim shadow-land without
For something more sublime.

Think what their lives have been,
Under your luminous Italian sky !
A hunted, outlawed, lonely, homesick race,
Whose fortune went awry.
Though they might stand above their grief serene,
What does the phrenzied gaze of Tasso mean,
The look in Dante's face ?

Just as the nightingale

Was said to rest her bosom on a thorn,

And from the ecstatic anguish of the wound

Her haunting notes were born,

So by the hearts that pointed woes impale,

Whose triumph and whose tortures do not fail,

The noblest lyres are tuned.

For joy is near akin

To grief, and rapture close to agony.

There is no certain line 'twixt life and death,

But imperceptibly

Waves ebb and flow.—Sorrow and pain and sin

Has each the flower of beauty shut within,

That opens at a breath.

And though we may not read

The secret now, yet would my heart proclaim

Envy of you,—not pity's insolence.

Out of the gloom you came,
High priest of pain's majestic unknown creed,
With weird rites woke, yet soothed, the human need,
And proudly bore you hence.

A BISCAYAN VISION

Who has words to paint the splendour where the
moonlight weds the sea,

Winds a cobweb cloth of silver round her limbs,
yet leaves them free,

Robes her all in bridal whiteness, clasps and folds
her lovingly?

Burnished field of liquid silence where our vessel
toils and ploughs,

Panting like a goaded bullock, thrusting with her
stubborn bows

Headway through the virgin waste that bears and
spurns a thousand prows,

Surge of cloven water murmurs constant as a
rushing stream,
Mingled with the dull mechanic throbbing from
the heart of steam,
Rocks our souls to wakeful slumber, charms them
in a living dream.

Sudden falls a misty curtain, softly glides across the
moon,
Blots the gleam of wrinkled waters, drapes in many
a grey festoon
Waves whose rounded swell reflected stars that
fade like eyes aswoon.

Darkened light or lighted darkness !—phantom
world beyond a shroud !

Surely there are ghosts within these magic draperies
of cloud !

Something wakes the yearning voice wherewith my
spirit cries aloud.

See—the answer !—Slowly, proudly, through the
veil of shining haze,

Spars and masts of bygone fashion, sails unfurled in
older days

Shape a stately progress bearing down the moon's
unearthly rays.

Dreamily distinct and vivid, ere they vanish, all
around

Ships,—more ships,—a mighty squadron moving
with no movement's sound,

Spectral shapes of all the fleets that e'er across the
Bay were bound.

Just a moment gleams the gilding on some quaint
uplifted poop,

Pennants flash and heavy folds of battle-flags forgotten droop,

Here beside a frigate's mast-head, there above some
gliding sloop.

Weirdly beautiful the glimpse of this old floating
warrior-host,

Symbol of such buried pride, so lost a pomp, so
cold a boast,—

Ah, the silent guns whose thunder echoed on the
distant coast !

Vaguely though the crowded mass of yonder fleet
be seen and felt,

Should the vision try to single one ship from that
circling belt,

Blurred and curtained 'mid the ghostly multitude
her lines will melt.

Like the myriad stars above us carpeting the
Milky Way,

Countless ships in white confusion flicker through
the haunted Bay,

Older than the Roman galleys, young as barks of
yesterday.

How the longing grows to hail them, hear some
Captain's grim reply !

Surely there are moving figures ! Surely comes a
floating cry !

Oh, my pale and voiceless brothers, tell me of your
lives gone by !

Ye who sailed and fought with Cæsar, ye who
 swept the main with Drake,
Dane and Saxon, Frank and Spaniard,—all who
 kept the world awake,
Battled with the tameless ocean, loved it for the
 danger's sake,

Lived for just the worth of living, failed and
 conquered, laughed and died,
Matched the raging wind in anger, faced the sun
 with kindred pride,
Wrestled with the lonely Spirit dwelling on the
 waters wide,

Answer !—Answer !—Give me greeting ! me
 whose soul is all athirst,

Panting for your larger freedom, pining for the
strength to burst

Clumsy bands that hold me from you, links my
straining heart has cursed.

Silence answers,—and the wash of broken water
there below,

Rippling back to leave our course a path of foam
like driven snow,

Baffled flakes, that tried to hold us, flung behind
with master throw.

Like a folded veil the sea-fog rolls itself towards
the stars,

Sweeps away the sails in smoke, unbinds the
rigging, breaks the spars,

Clears the sea of all but moonbeams fit for mer-
maids' window-bars.

Void the pale transparent vastness, holding nought
but eerie light,
Mirrored on our deck like glow-worms where it
turns the dewdrops white,
Making ours the only phantom-ship upon the sea
to-night.

RALEIGH'S LAST VOYAGE

THE slow-swung cabin-lantern marks the tread
Monotonous of Time's advancing foot,
Just as a pendulum tires with dull beat
Some sick man's eye. Hour piles her weight on hour,
And lame day shuffles into night. Beyond
The port-hole heaves and foams that weary sea,
Condemned to everlasting, vain unrest.
Muffled and vague, perpetual noises drift
Into the rocking cabin,—hasty tread
Of footsteps on the deck, the flap of sails,
The creak of cordage hauled, the rudder's groan.
One only thing seems quiet,—a bent grey head

Whereon the lantern-rays fall dim, when night
Blots ocean's pallid gleam.

Anger all spent,
Hope killed, ambition broken, all the flowers
Of life turned brown and trampled,—guarding only
Some shreds of pride, the old undaunted heart,
Raleigh goes home,—home to the snarling throng
Of enemies, the craven, treacherous King,
Foul hatred's legal masquerade,—and Death.

O'er the white wake of foam the sea-gulls dip,
A shade less grey than the sad, darkening sea,
A shade less grey than thought, pale, haunting
thought.

Faint clouds take form, and drift, and disappear,
Lost in the hazy sky. The dusk comes down,

Blurs the clear line of shrouds, enfolds the mast,
Darkens the shaded sails. A warning gleam
Of signal-light goes out to touch the top
Of, here and there, a rolling wave, that else
Were covered up, like all this restless world,
In soft, suffusing gloom.

It is not sweet,
This blank, despairing sense of overthrow,
It is not sweet to find each vista barred,
Backward or forward, by the hooded shape
Of grief. Behind,—the long corroding years
Wherein captivity rusted good limbs,
Then brief deliverance, reckless final throw
Of dice on Fortune's table—and all gone.
Forward,—victorious foes, dejected friends,
The wounded lion crawling back to his lair,

Fingers that point derision, low, hard yelp
Of courtly jackals, the triumphant mask
Of the long-toothed, vulpine Spaniard,—oh, kind
God !

Courage,—more courage yet to face it all !
With what fierce, envious longing will the heart
Review that fatal tropic forest-land
Where Raleigh's first-born buried lies, and where
Lie buried Raleigh's hopes,—the old, wild hopes,
Lit by white burning of a poet's brain,
Warm with the glow of an Adventurer's dream.
What more could bruise the woman-heart at home,
Dear, brave companion of once glorious days ?
She lent to Fortune all her treasure ;—how
Does Fortune recompense the debt ? Indeed
It had been better if the father's bones
Lay by the son's, so that his death-sealed ears

Heard not the sobbing of these mournful waves,
That lap against the vessel's side, and moan
“Defeat,” “Defeat.”

Night comes, and fresher wind,
That sets the frigate reeling as she tacks,
Picking her homeward path so daintily
Through unkempt, ragged waters. Sleep at last
Makes harbour for that tempest-weary brain.
Yet even to her calm port turbulent winds
Blow threatening voices on the wings of dreams,
And sleep, half-madness and half anodyne,
Paints shapes to be forgotten on the clouds
That race through fancy's sky. Contorted thoughts
And nightmare memories of late, past days
Hover in wheeling circles round ;—suspense
Of that long vigil on Guiana's coast,

Sick body helping not sick mind to bear
The blank of tarrying news,—then, deeper gulf
Than no news, the returning worn-out band,
Whose cloud of dark depression struck down hope,
Like the black sail of Theseus, when it slew
The old Athenian king ;—and then the hell
Of fierce recriminations, blame, revolt,—
More blood, more death, more misery,—and, at
last,

The sullen setting forth of listless men
In sea-worn, faded ships, the slow, dull walk
Of days that beat them up the Atlantic coast,
The surly faces, wrathful muttering tongues,
Suddenly tuned to voices mutinous
In thundered menace, through the fogs that shroud
The iceberg-haunted Island of the North,
And he, the proud commander, unbeyed,

Driven to plead, surrender, abdicate
 Impregnable authority.—What dreams !

So wears the night to day and day to night,
 Processionally mournful as the wash
 Of these attendant waves, or trivial sounds
 And sights of daily ship-life, that recur
 With changeless iteration ;—wonted cry
 Of sailors heaving at a rope, sharp clang
 Of ship-bell, strange, impersonal report
 On time's progression chanted by the watch,
 Flutter of bunting, to the obedient fleet
 Casting her leader's orders, droop or spread
 Of canvas, grunt of pulley, thump of block,—
 Repeated all,—and in the unquiet brain
 The wheel of repetition turning thought.

Ah, to be old ! to feel no more the juice

Of youthful resolution surge and mount
Warm through the time-gnawed trunk,—to feel
no more

The stir of hope with each awakening
From dreamless nights,—to know the last edge
turned,

The last fall taken in Life's tournament.

There is no earthly sadness quite like this,
Even for bravest hearts. The golden cup
Where wine once foamed now serves for opiate
drugs,—

Endurance, resignation, faith,—whose power
May force the threatening thunderstorm of grief
To grumble in the distance, but must fail
To light the extinguished sun of yesterday.
Such sadness governs not, for courage rules
Till death, so Raleigh hopes, and weariness

Numbs the pierced heart ; but still desire looks
 forth,

Like frantic Ariadne on the shore

Of Naxos, claiming from life's pitiless sea

The joys it bore away. Acceptance hard,

Never again to lead majestic

The floating pomp of England's battle-line ;

Never again to ravish unknown seas,

Or search mysterious and reluctant shores

For coyly guarded secrets, fabled wealth ;

Never again in rival courtliness

Or learned emulation to outshine

Wit's paladins or fashion's hierarchs ;

Never again to feel the burning blood

Leap at Love's shy unveiling ;—all is dust,

All roads approach the grave. Yet will not he,

Lordliest of Adventurers, bewail

This last adventure coming ; he, whose goal
Was ever things unseen, whose playground lay
Ever in lands unknown, will proudly pass
Those dark and intricate straits to where *That* lies
Whose shadow shapes the words,—Unseen, Un-
known.

Yes, at the thought, old fire exuberant
Throbs through the bosom, lights the faded look ;—
Still are their waters whence no sail has come,
The last and greatest Ocean unexplored.

Day after day the ship goes wandering
Across the Atlantic plain, all loneliness,
Save where a porpoise leaps or spouts a whale,
Seeming eternal wilderness of brine,
Eternal sameness and eternal change.
At times she bounds and quivers amid the whirl

Of Mænad waters, in their phrenzied dance
Tossing wild locks of foam, and noisily
Flying before mad Bacchanalian winds.
Then, like the heart of her great Admiral,
She reels beneath the fateful buffetings,
And all her timbers groan. There is no peace,
No rest,—the long, laborious, struggling crawl
Up the great, green wave's side, the wrenching
pitch
When bows come bursting into spray-veiled air,
And every oak-heart trembles, ere she dip
Plumb to the further slope beyond the boil
Of the billow's frothy crest,—and then the slide
Down, down into the yawn of that great gulf;
Again the plunge and shock and jarring strain,
Then hoisted bows,—like sinewy shoulders heaved
Swift by a leaping horse,—then all once more,

Wave after wave surmounted. And meanwhile
Unearthly voices yell among the shrouds,
And rent waves toss Medusa's hissing hair,
And all the infernal choir comes up from Hell
To shriek their cruel anthem tauntingly
In Raleigh's ears, while he, with haggard frown,
Looks out at Ocean's wild Walpurgis-night,
And hears the uproarious voices, wondering.

And then, at times, come sunlit, gentle days,
When wrathful green and passionate foam-white
No longer stain the water, but, a sheet
Of silken undulation, softly blue,
The great kind Ocean heaves with long-drawn
 breath,
Rocking herself to slumber. Then the ship,
Like a slow, stately swan, rides lazily

O'er each round bank of moving ocean-swell,
 Clear and translucent vaults of deep cobalt,
 Lustrous like beds of turquoise, and thick pearls
 Of snowy bubblings underneath the keel.
 Then to the grief-worn heart a calmer mood
 Comes, like narcotic numbness preluding
 Some opium-eater's dream. And past life hangs
 A fair-framed picture upon Memory's wall,
 With all the cruder colours fading out.
 Yes, they were worth their pleasure those dead days,
 And worth their price, though Fortune now demand
 Truly a Shylock-payment. That which *was*
 No failure can make null;—the reckless joys,
 Insatiable ambitions, burning hopes,
 The power, the pride, the triumph!—They may go,
 Fickle as wanton women, but sometime
 Have they been Raleigh's indisputably

To embrace, to enjoy ;—cold, they can ne'er unlive
Their nuptial night, nor take their kisses back.
Joy, once possessed, remains, a frozen flower
In cleaving amber of Remembrance shrined.

Thus leisurely pass on the sauntering hours,
Till one uproarious storm-day brings in sight
Land, through a revelry of rain and foam,
And, shoreward forced, unwilling, timorous ships
Chased by the barking wind, like frightened deer,
Double and plunge along the threatening wall
Of cliffs that rampart Ireland. So they speed,
Much buffeted, beside the bare green hills,
Where, here and there, some lonely cabin dots
The rain-soaked surface. Suddenly upheaves
White broken edge of ocean, rearing high
Ladders of foam against the guardian rocks

That push them tumbling, with slow, gentle scorn.
 Peril so looming picturesquely close,
 The draggled fleet beats onward to Kinsale,
 And there finds harbour. Royal Nemesis,
 Here is thy destined judgment! Raleigh comes,
 Raleigh,—once dreaded, powerful, arrogant
 Master on Irish shores,—now crushed, condemned,
 Half-captive,—hiding in an Irish port
 The remnants of dominion lost and last,
 His battered funeral fleet.

Oh, weeping land,
 Whose lips are salt with tears, whose bosom lies
 Nakedly helpless under Fortune's wind,
 Who clasp sad children in your blood-stained
 arms,—
 Ever was pain your hard inheritance

And sorrow your companion. Ireland!—turn
Your tear-lined face to pardon, pityingly,
Your harsh, great-hearted tyrant. You have been
Man's helpless victim,—lust, oppression, wrong
Have ravaged your worn heart, long used to bear
Anguish, alike for fierce unnatural sons
And coldly cruel strangers. Misery
Alone can teach compassion. Let the smile
Holy with all forgiveness, light once more
Your wild and sombre beauty! Let your breast,
Your tender, false, rebellious, trustful breast,
Hold him in kindly shelter! Hate not now
This broken, white-haired warrior, whose hot youth
Swept o'er your soil with slaughter. If his road
In life with blood was sprinkled, equally
His own blood marks the trail. Forget,—forget
A brave man's ruthless days, and let him dream

Of peaceful hours and that dear friendship nursed
 On Mulla's banks, when poet walked with poet,
 And Spencer's tune was matched on Raleigh's
 tongue.

Poor "Shepherd of the Ocean!" fugitive
 From blighted pasture-lands, he gathers home
 Few sheep and sickly, with his broken crook.

Now flutter forth again wave-beaten ships
 To tramp their final stage. It is late Spring,
 And days grow long, and pirate east winds sheathe
 Their cruel knives, and, growling many a curse,
 Slink back to barren steppes and ice-bound wastes.
 Yes, it is Spring in England,—ripe, green Spring
 In Raleigh's own West Country, whose rich hills,
 Leashed in their wild rock-girdle by the sea,
 Each hour brings nearer now. His heart goes back

On billows of remembrance, capturing
The loved, familiar landmarks. Ah, those days
When every flower breathed promise, when the dew
Glowed with reflected hope, and cool dark streams
Mirrored brave Fancy's pictures, when warm blood
Beat like a drum for coming battles ! Here
Are hearts unchanging and unchangeable.
No Devon man has wavered ; all are true
To him whose fame garlands the Devon stock.
No kingly, Scotch buffoon, but Raleigh reigns
In cloven valleys amid sapling oaks,
Where the wood-pigeon's soft contralto cry
Answers hoarse baritone of calling rooks ;
Where shaggy, rust-red cattle climb the steep
Green slope that ends in sky, or ruminant
Knee-buried in luxuriant meadow-grass
Beside the winding river ; where tall herons

Wait, statuesque, for ruby-spotted trout.

And on the heather-purpled moorland wastes

Where antlered kings hold court; and on the cliffs

Where shag and sea-gull house; through all the
land,

The sweet, damp pasturage and apple-land,

Whose strong, amphibious sons alike could chase

A Spanish galleon or a hill-side fox,

Is Raleigh named and honoured. Were but theirs

The ruling voice of England, with what hope

Might he come sailing into Plymouth Sound!

Alas, hope's light has paled like clouded stars,

When Raleigh's bark, with omen-laden name,

Rides at her final anchor. He must tread

The pathway of the Shadow, take the last

Farewell of earthly seas. Fierce, desperate,

His brain will scheme for life one battle more
With any weapon, plan, or stratagem ;
That failing, he will breathe a nobler spirit,
And go to death as martyrs die. Poor world
Of baffled phantoms ! Have our deaths and births
Much meaning after all ? Well, here at least
Passes a man moulded in Life's red fire.
Fate weaves a chequered groundwork for such
souls ;
Dark, transient Evil ;—bright, eternal Good.

CLEOPATRA IN ROME

CLEOPATRA ! Cleopatra !

Through silken hangings the low wind stirs
Like a passionate sigh from those lips of hers
That have kissed hot fools to their death ; she lies
Watchful, with her glittering eyes
Turned to the marble court ; the gloom—
Rich with colour, breathing perfume,
Thundrous in heavy, whispering hush
Of soundless fans, and the swaying flush
Of clouded curtains, that catch the gleam
Of a vagrant, weary-winged sunbeam,—
Veils her half-robed limbs and her throat,
Browned on the golden sands remote
By the desert daylight, and that thick hair,

Vaguely tossed in the darkness there,
That droops with many a straying tress
To brush the pale voluptuousness
Of her bare, smooth bosom. The day is spent,
And the sun draws near to his purple tent
Behind the darkening, clear-cut hill
On the rim of a landscape lying still
In passionate, fevered slumber ; soon
Will night's lamp-laden slave, the moon,
Guide to the lithe queen, panther-curved,
A lover whose footstep shakes the world.
And she waits, with throb of her eager brain
Hot for the clash with a master's mind,
While the blood-beat aches in each rebel vein
That kingly reason in dreams to bind,
And hold him passion-blind.
Cæsar ! Cæsar !

Cleopatra ! Cleopatra !

Out of the twilight comes alone
The uncrowned ruler who makes her throne
Seem but a sparkle of make-believe
In the web that a school-girl's fancies weave,
A toy forgotten. How would she tell
The various motive-threads of the spell
He has woven to hold her ? Watch him there,
Clinging to some of the dandy's air,
With his elderly neatness, careful drape
Of robe, trim sandals, lean spare shape,
Thin locks over baldness laid, grave style
Of courtly bearing, and wrinkled smile,—
But ah ! with the brow of a lord of men,
Throat of a monarch, firm lips that pen
Kingly command in their close-shut breath,
And eyes that are looking through life and death !

Yes, it is love that he wakes, although
One faint chill discord rings in the glow
Of blood's delirium. Could but the trace
Of faded beauty in that worn face
Bloom to its former wealth ! Could lines
Of assaulting age's countermines
Melt, like gossamer threads from the grass
When fiery hours of summer pass !
Can *she*, whose sensuous fancy swims
In waves of passion,—she, with the limbs
And the parted mouth and the eyes of fire
And ever-burning bosom's desire,—
Can she bask in the evening sun, nor long
For the ardent noon-day's thunder-song ?
Yet the shade of doubt dies dreamily
Before his tender, questioning gaze.
What of time's ravage !—This is *he*

Who chains her soul with his master-ways,
And laughs at load of days,
Cæsar ! Cæsar !

Cleopatra ! Cleopatra !

Harboured safe in those long, soft arms,
Her cooling touch, like an opiate charms
Slow, dull pain from his forehead,—the weight
Of labour, strife, and dreams, that of late
Have made sleep come, as no foe e'er came,
Foreboding terror, threatening shame.
He yields her a despot's right to rule
The mind that none could bewitch, befool.
No helpless prisoner, swayed and bent
In tyrant passion's abandonment,
But, master still, he suffers her kiss
Of haughty, fierce, imperiousness,

With a smile, all tender but half-sad,—
Loving with laughter, wearily glad.
Not for his life-worn heart the glow
Of passion's sunlight on virgin snow.
He has read in the book that all men read,—
Though none could interpret,—and the creed
He has learned there hopes not much divine
From the dispensation feminine.
Love is the dice of the Gods. He takes
His chance, but will not forget the stakes.
Reading her thoughts, he drops one sigh
To the manly beauty of days gone by
When women would love him for his limbs
And the eyes whose ardour time now dims,—
Though the thought dies out in a gentle laugh,
Sculpturing boyhood's epitaph.
To wince from wounds like that were a jest ;

But, biting deeper into his breast,
Is a faint strange sense of aching void,
Of pearls imperfect, of gold alloyed.
The uncompanioned heart that has wooed,
Yet found no mate in its solitude,
Almost grudges the price of the throne
Where genius sets her children—alone.
Yet he lets the vessel of reason drift
On the sea of fire poured from her eyes,
Lazily taking the Gods' good gift,—
While she, though burning, has wit to prize
This lover, calm and wise.
Cæsar ! Cæsar !

Cleopatra ! Cleopatra !
Hours have passed,—it is afternoon
When, from a long deep sleep like a swoon,

The flushed Queen wakes to the warm delight
Of fresh life dawning after the night;
And her languid thoughts play lazily
With the last remembered time, while she
Smiling lies with her brown arms bare,
And thinks who kissed her dishevelled hair.
Some strange influence surely crept
Over her senses before she slept,
When this faded, wasted lover could hold
Her tangled in meshes manifold,
Such as no beautiful youth has twined
Across her strong, voluptuous mind.
And she builds up drowsy, pleasant dreams,
And paints a gallery of bright schemes,
For power and conquest makes her plan
Over and through this master-man.
When sudden floats to her ears a cry,

And a far, sad tumult drifting by,
And the wail of slaves, and halting tread
Of timid footsteps, as though men fled;
And angry, startled, she springs alert,
Vaguely afraid of treacherous hurt,
When into her sunlit chamber creeps
A favoured, intimate girl, who weeps
Prostrate before her, and, frightened, tells
A tale that deafens like jangled bells.
And rage and sorrow darken her eyes

In a mist where hands are groping, red
With the blood of a royal one who lies,
Kingly enough, with his shrouded head;—

Cæsar !—betrayed and dead !

Cæsar ! Cæsar !

EURYDICE

THE breakers were like grey despondent things
That tossed wild hair, and, raging hopelessly,
Leaped on the grim, disdainful rocks, and fell
Shattered and weary back, with whisperings
Of some strange message that they might not tell,
Some sorrow-burdened secret of the sea,
With long care sheltered under their white wings
In guardianship for me.

Ah, but I took their meaning. Faint and blue
Along the liquid world's horizon spread,—
Almost as though 'twere floating poised in air,
So like were sky and water,—I could view

The coast of that sweet, sun-bathed country, where
You loved to wander ;—and I bowed my head.
For, scarce beyond mine eyes' sad range I knew
That you were lying dead.

Cut was the tangled skein of your short life ;
Darkened were your deep eyes ; your warm heart
cold ;
Your fair young face to marble turned ;—oh, grief
Can shape not thus, as with a carver's knife,
Your dear, dead image ! Death had bound his sheaf
And stored his harvest ;—so the tale was told,
Only I prayed that you were bruised with strife
No longer as of old.

So I sat dumb before the surge and boil
Of water, casting foam-flakes at my feet,
And felt the sunlit sadness of the day,

Remembering your brief and tragic toil
Along life's road, and how you used to say
You had found bitter all that should be sweet.
For one great want was ever there to spoil
The picture incomplete.

You had so much that other women ask,—
Love, homage, power, amusement, interest,
And foolish hearts to trample on at will,
And vital wine from Fortune's jewelled flask,—
But for Love's true surrender were you still
A seeker, vainly tortured by your quest,
And your proud laughter only served to mask
The void within your breast.

Men loved you,—men whose love was no light gift.
You played with it, and, like a broken toy,
Cast it away, and turned to search once more

For final perfect passion that should lift
You to those heights where all that passed before
Would melt into the radiant song of joy
From your long-looked-for Orpheus, with no rift
The lute-tone to destroy.

Orpheus ! Ah yes that ancient legend seemed
Somehow with your most modern story blent,
Like throb of mournful harp-strings breaking
through

Fuller orchestral sound. I sat and dreamed
That the forlorn, forsaken soul was *you*
Whom Hades held in loveless banishment,
Seeking by every pallid light that gleamed
The way your lost one went.

Poor lonely, pale Eurydice !—you cried
For him to hear and hasten, but your call

Sadly unanswered rang through that dark place,
Save when faint echoes tauntingly replied,
Or, lonely too, some white ghost turned a face
Of hopeless, voiceless pleading,—but the wall
Of black mist curtained off that world outside
Where no such cry could fall.

And now you reach *some* portal, and who knows
What you have found beyond it? Have you passed
Into a fairer, sunnier land than yon
Sweet France you loved so? Have you found
repose
Of soul, and is the weary feeling gone
That numbed your life? And has your Orpheus
cast
The web of magic music that he throws
And swept you in at last?

Ah me ! 'Tis idle work to speculate
And question that dumb Oracle who stands
Before the door where ends all human breath.
It may be that no earthly love or hate
Haunt the dim cloisters of thy temple, Death !
That, whirled away on passion's drifting sands
Are those vague joys for which we supplicate
With stretched, appealing hands.

It may be we shall find ourselves awake,
And rub our eyelids sleepily, and laugh
To think that we were fretful and perturbed
About the childish trifles that we take
So hardly now ; that we could once be curbed
By passion's fears, and find its hope a staff ;
And o'er our old dead sorrows we shall make
A mocking epitaph.

All things are possible,—and none we know.
I turned from that impenetrable veil
Which hides, but cannot hush, the wings of Hope,
And, through the murmur of the waves below,
I thought once more to hear your sad voice grope,
Bearing its plaintive burden, and the pale
Reflected flakes of sunlight seemed to show
Your eyes with their wild tale.

Oh, comrade unforgotten ! Have you found
That which you looked for ?—all the hopes you told
To me, the friend you trusted in far years,
Your sometime pilot, privileged to sound
The surface-laughing ocean of your tears ?
I have some sacred memories to hold
In ward for you, a little volume bound
With clasps of purest gold.

I could not help you then, nor now I may,
Who were so very helpless, yet so brave,
In those unhappy, joyful, reckless times.
I have no garland I can give to-day
Except my poor unheard, unheeded rhymes,
Precious because you cared for them, and, save
For that, a very withered gift to lay
In silence on your grave.

Yet I believe you know the thoughts that grew
When slowly home, before the setting sun,
I walked along the cliff, until the sky
Grew dark, and stars came out ; and wet with dew,
My pathway seemed of tears. But *yours* were dry,
Your earthly trouble hushed, your conflict done.
Across the bay, a last salute to you,
Thundered the evening gun.

•

“THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE
SEA IN SHIPS”

SLOWLY going from the crowded quay,
 With all its noise and glare,
The long ship turns her head to the sea,
And the harbour-sounds die dreamily
 In warm, illumined air.

Tall, anchored vessels are vague and fade,
 And pale, reflected light,
In bars o'er the dark smooth water laid
From pile and pier,—with the moon to aid,—
 Passes into the night.

Blurred land goes back, and a mounded swell

Shatters the mirrored stars,

And tumbles the lighted buoys, that tell

The roadway, ringing a float-borne bell,

That weirdly clangs—and jars.

But silence comes, till never a sound

In the ghostly hush is heard,

Save eager pistons that thump and pound,

And the wash of water rippling round,

And cry of some dim bird.

And the vast and starry temple grows,

With gleaming, swaying floor,

And the startled soul looks out, and knows

That here Time's brief adventurer goes

Through the mysterious door

76 THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA

Of that great innermost shrine, whereto

Each priestly pathway leads,

Where Man learned all that he ever knew

Of things beyond, and the myths that grew

Slowly into his creeds.

Stars and sea and the night are a veil,

Through which we seem to grope

For steps that lead to the altar-rail

Guarding the fires, that will not fail,

Of sacramental Hope.

With feet earth-planted, our faith dies down

To scarcely heeded qualms,

A whisper caught from the strident town,

A faint truth seen through the bigot's frown,

Or heard in his dull psalms.

But here, where the moon's inspiring light

Silvers the windowed waves,

With a plank 'twixt us and the Infinite,

Over the field of an endless fight

That fills uncounted graves,

The hard, material logic seems

Poorer than cabin-lamp,

In face of the radiance of moonbeams,

And, tented safe in their clear white dreams,

Our souls must fain encamp

On ground of super-sensual thought,

With mystic sword and spear,

For earthly knowledge will count for nought,

And spectral foes the old prophets fought

Perilously draw near.

78 THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA

Even as the Hebrew poet sung

Is ocean's solitude,

Now haunted, as when the world was young

By spirits, using an unknown tongue,

Who tune us to their mood.

On galley-benches, under the whips,

Cowering Roman slaves

Looked up for the new Apocalypse ;

And Norsemen, steering their dragon-ships,

Asked it of Baltic waves.

The Spaniard, bathing in blood and fire

The name of Holy Church,

Letting his hope to a priest for hire,

Yet felt the glow of a strange desire,

And knew the seaman's search.

And men who starred with their names the roll

Of sea-girt England's fame,

Rough, salted fellows, who left the soul

To chance till the Reaper claimed his toll,

Sought what they ne'er could name.

Ever the unanswered question asked,

Ever the weary cry

Of hearts whose courage is over-tasked

By the haunting Presence, veiled and masked,

Felt in the darkness nigh.

Our quest is the same as theirs, who strove

To talk with more than men

In Jewish temple or Pagan grove,—

Osiris, Odin, Jehovah, Jove,—

We seek Him now as then.

80 THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA

But, doubtful of deities who scourge

With thunderbolt and rod,

We picture One who shall calm the surge

Of our spirits' ocean, and emerge

A gentle, smiling God.

Out to the sea and the night we reach

Appealing arms, and pray

For a Friend to hear our human speech,

A heart to answer, a Voice to teach,

A Hand to point the way.

And the sweet sea-murmurs make reply,

So tenderly confused,—

Like a nurse to children,—and the sky

Is even as some kind creature's eye,

Compassionate, amused.

Gently chiding, they awake the sense,
Of something more than joy
And more than sorrow,—a confidence
That marks the course of our passage hence
Surer than chart or buoy.

We feel it a nobler task to sail
Over an unknown sea,
With hope and courage that will not fail,
Than to pray for Heaven to rend the veil
Shrouding the mystery.

Enough for us to have felt life's glow
Fanned by the moving Breath
Abroad on the waters, ere we go
To learn the secret that lies below
The land-locked waves of Death.

PROMETHEUS

WE seem to watch the vague white dawn unfold
In rolling wreaths of mist along the crags,

And soon

The pale belated moon,
Who still behind her starry henchmen lags,
Is pelted forth with javelin shafts of gold

By the fierce sun,
Sweeping above the saw-backed mountain-chain
To drop his fiery lances, one by one,
On to the waking plain.

And slowly we discern Thy worn, proud face,
In all its undefeated agony,

Thy mood,

No torture has subdued,

Of scornful freedom,—though Thou art not free,—

The fire that lights Thy haggard eyes, the grace

Of Thy bound limbs,

Cramped with long pain,—ah, let the picture stand!

Nothing in all our later knowledge dims

This dream from an old land.

Thou art the deathless type of them who dare

To beard an unjust tyrant and defy

The hate

That holds their earthly fate

In its foul grip,—of them who ne'er comply

With craven counsel, pleading false yet fair,

But stand alone

When others cringe and fawn and compromise,

Facing the Wrong whose right they will not own
With uncomplaining eyes.

Their tombs are marble mile-stones on the road
Nations have trod to freedom. Their names ring
Through tales

Cherished in lonely dales
And mountain homes,—through songs the people
sing

Behind the plough, or with the harvest-load.

Like stars they gleam
Out of the human gloom and storm-clad past,
And in the march of many a youthful dream
They sound a trumpet-blast.

We know them all of old. But who can claim
Descent in line of true succession now
From Thee

Who taught men to be free,
Who let no brand of serfdom mark thy brow,
Who bade thy fellows loose them from the shame
Of ignorance,
Thwarting the Oppressor who would keep them
bound,
And by Thy torture purchased their advance,—
A martyr lightning-crowned ?

For Despots quake upon their thrones, and Kings
Act in the People's playhouse and must earn
Applause

From those who make the laws,
And Priests no longer now have power to burn
Disputants deaf to their admonishings ;
And even they,
Whose gold enslaves our vulgar world and rules,

More than a monarch's sceptre, cannot sway
Any but their poor tools.

Ah no,—the new Prometheus will oppose
A stronger, subtler tyranny,—the voice
Of mobs

Wherein blind passion throbs,
The crude, coarse blunders of the public choice,
The veering wind rhetorical that blows
In daily print,
Folly and cant and clamour, dullness fed
On waste of weak emotion without stint,
Hard heart and too soft head.

He will not stand against the tyrant One,
While dumb but grateful multitudes upraise
His thought
With sense of their lives bought,

With silent love that speaks in wordless ways.

Austere and stern the duty to be done,

In loneliness,

Misjudged, reviled, deserted, ridiculed,

With many tongues to curse and few to bless,

And none by reason ruled.

Chained to a colder couch than Thy bleak rock

On frozen Caucasus, no Herakles

Shall rend

His galling bonds and end

The punishment of him who will not please

The loud-voiced shepherds of the foolish flock.

But he will wait

Conscious of that whereto his thoughts aspire,

And to his Tyrant's dupes disseminate

Thy nobly stolen Fire.

STELLA'S COTTAGE

THEY say she lived here. True or not,
'Tis certain that, like faint perfume,
Remembrance hangs about the spot
Of her old graceful buried bloom.
These fields and woods and yonder stream
Were setting for her girlish dream.

Somewhere on this green land she grew
Into that sweet, mysterious thing,
Ripe maidenhood, and slowly knew
The wondrous knowledge years will bring
Even to modest maids who eat
Bread of dependence,—none too sweet.

For here one crossed her sheltered path,
Whose fortune shared her servitude :
Lord of a heritage of wrath,
Of power untamed, of genius crude,—
A writhing Titan, shaped in pain,
Seared by his own white-burning brain.
She alone saw the tortured pride,
The smouldering rage, the shielded scorn,
The yearnings daily crucified,
The chains by fierce ambition worn.
Her gentle soul could comprehend
His fate, who had no other friend,
Only a patron,—not unkind,
Weighted with that dull cleverness
Which clothes the true official mind
And stamps the common-place success,

Who deemed the uncourtly Swift, no doubt,
A talented and learnèd lout.

And all the Moor Park guests,—the men
With stars adorned, with ribands girt,—
The type, as now, rewarded then
For kinship, wealth,—and *some* desert,—
Would hope Sir William's goodness prized
By the rough youth he patronized.

And that same graceless youth, the while,
Measured and weighed them in his thought,
And pondered, with a savage smile,
On value borne by things of nought,
On lucky dips in Fortune's bowl,
And how the part exceeds the whole.

And, raging with the bitter sense
Of life's injustice, he would seek

In irony his recompense,
His fury screened behind some freak
Of scornful wit,—a lonely jest
Gibbering through his hollow breast.

But the satiric phrenzy lost
Its power to poison and corrode
His fiery spirit, when he crossed
Her threshold and laid down his load
Of sleepless mutiny, that tore
His heart and left an unhealed sore.

Her tender presence seemed to cast
A calm on that discoloured sea
Of wan emotion, where the blast
Of anger thundered sullenly.
Her voice, like David's harp, could roll
The storm-clouds from his darkened soul.

Her eyes, untutored, saw the worth
Of this great crooked, gifted mind,
Which dazed the pompous lords of earth
With flashing wit, that left them blind,—
In its unlovely strength alone,
A hunchback crowned on reason's throne.

And thus the famous tale began
Of her love's tragic sacrifice
To one half god, yet less than man,
With brain of fire and blood of ice.
Cruel that her white feet should miss
The common road of happiness !

Yet all things have their price. She gave
Her love for some few years, and earned
A name, thereby, beyond the grave,
A shrine where candles yet are burned

By worshippers who know the task
Of them that give—but never ask.

And this meek maiden stands among

The immortal lovers ;—she whose smile
Lost Troy, and she whom Virgil sung,

And the dread Serpent of old Nile
Were all her sisters. Gentle heart,
In what strange company thou art !

EVERSLEY

ALL the prophets are dead
Who moved like ghosts in the hazy dawn of our
youth,
Where questioning souls toiled after them, comforted

By the hope of a cloudless truth.
In this yew-tree-guarded plot by the pathway lies
One of our early captains. Now, to the eyes
Weary with life-long watching and dim with old
tears,
He may lose some span of the stature of those years,
He, and our other giants,—the warrior sage,
Whose fierce heart, warped in the flame of its
honest rage,

Yet taught us a creed of courage, weighing the
worth

Of heroes that bear the sword of God upon
earth,—

And he, who, drunk with beauty and light as with
wine,

Stirred us with rich, wild speech of his phrenzy
divine,

Art's lightning-veined Dionysius;—too well I know

New wisdom pointed her scorn at them long ago,

Showing the flaws in the work and the faults of
the men.

There may be no voices to hail them, no knee to
bow

At shrines made sacred for us by their worship
then,—

But who are your prophets now?

All the prophets are dead.

Lingering sunbeams aslant on the white stone cross
Paint us an epitaph,—more than the words we
read,—

Telling our greater loss.

Not for the leader alone, whom we never knew,
We sigh, but for buried dreams, the visions that grew
To cover the world like a veil and hide grey things
That we wanted to walk apart from,—bargainings
In love and honour, the low ambition, the lust
For wealth and its tawdry pleasures, the fouling dust
Where idol-worshippers crowd on their temple-
stair,—

Alas! now these things are plain to us everywhere,
And the dreams are few,—yet are they living, and
come

Just when we fancy that all the voices are dumb,

Save those of the market-place, and we cry aloud
For one with wide clear eyes to walk forth from
the crowd

And speak as these dead men spoke, till the world
shall turn

From the shams and the cant and the comfort her
children sought,

To desires that only in hero-hearts may burn
For things which cannot be bought.

Prophet! come soon! come soon!

We scarcely seek you, we who are crossing the hill,
Whose way goes down to the pale mist under the
moon

In the valley where all is still.

But those who are coming behind us,—ah, they
need

One who will move as a pillar of fire, and lead
Their souls through the waste of a world where
died old faith,

Where men are toiling darkly to follow its wraith
Or setting up dismal things that perish for gods,
Save here and there, where some lordlier spirit
plods,

Away from the beaten road, through the wilderness,
To look for a newer Eden ; the vulgar stress
Of life may seem to have deadened all higher hopes,
But under the gold and the garbage Man's heart
gropes

Now, as in every time, for deliverance
From the sensual cage, and broken-winged he pants
For the power to soar. If only the world could
hear—

This coarse, material world,—an authentic voice

Bidding it watch, for a new Messiah was near,
The world would heed and rejoice.

Old dogmas are outworn
That he taught in this little church ; and all creeds
die ;
And teachers pass ; and the lesson-pages are torn,
And the dusty books laid by ;
But, at least, this man has helped us to hear the
note
Of the wordless song whose wandering murmurs
float
From fields that the sunlight splashes with golden-
brown
As it plays on the shocks of corn, from woods that
crown
The sloping ridges, from meadow and lane and heath,

And crowded pines, with a blush of heather beneath,
And the stream where the fat trout lie;—oh, here
is rest

From the world, with its fevered brain and panting
breast,

And Youth comes back with its visions, and that
sweet dawn

Of Hope, that lighted the dew upon dream-land's
lawn,

And set all the colours aflame in the garden-beds
Where the flowers of love and glory lifted their
heads,

And we see the land we had lost, and forget the din
Of a jarring age, and learn the wisdom anew,

That tells how only the losers in life shall win

And only the dreams be true.

MERMAIDS

“ ALL the lights are burning bright.”—The cry of
the watchman floats

Hoarsely aft, through the tangle, vague and
blurred,

Of cord and spar and crane and winch and shapeless,
sheeted boats,

Half-guessed, half-heard.

Star-illumined darkness lies in a thick transparent
veil

On lumbered deck and slowly heaving bows ;

Vision of dim chaotic sea and foam-streak, faint and
pale,

The light allows.

As though some buried lantern gleamed up through
the vault of brine,
Suddenly all is ghostly flame below,
Where fish-stirred, phosphorescent flakes of water
seethe and shine,
Coldly aglow.

Like an uncurtained window spreads the strangely
lighted sea
Over the pallid fire and spectral things
That whirl through molten stars and poise in a
liquid mystery
Their weightless wings.

Through the luminous surface comes a glimpse of
trailing hair
And wistful, haunted mouths and eager eyes,—

Surely each ripple flashes on familiar faces there
Before it dies !

Sweet unforgotten forms that drift out from the
perished years !

Pages written once in a secret book !

Palimpsests from the burning pen that passion
dipped in tears,
Where none may look !

Ah ! but you tell the life-long tale of ever-
smouldering fire,

And far, sweet dreams, and darkness where we
grobe,

And ache of uncompanioned hearts, and slumberless
desire

And wounded hope.

Sometimes there are souls that come to this alien
world by chance,

Following up a twisted, baffling trail,

Chasing a jack-o'-lantern light, that lives to shine
and dance

When all lights fail. ×

They seek the phantom shape that flies before and
is not here,

The loved, desired, and dreamed-of one they
know,—

Unseen, unheard, untouched,—yet felt so often
moving near

Like cloud-borne snow.

And, while their brief earth passage lasts, from time
to time they halt,

Feeling hope flash hot through their weariness,

Thinking, "Here is a kindred soul, with neither
flaw nor fault,

I must not miss!"

Dear eyes that answered smile for smile, you carry
no faint cloud

Of dim reproach! dear mouths, that love has
sealed

With sacred kisses, not one sigh comes from you,
firm and proud!

Old wounds are healed.

We soared and failed, and fell once more headlong
back to the earth,

And paid another toll-bar tax of pain,

But those wild joys, that died so young after their
lurid birth,

Were much to gain.

We have lived and laughed, and known at least the
flavour of Love's wine,
E'en from a flagon torn away too soon,
And, though the sun of dreams and dewy day no
longer shine,
Night brings the moon.

Love looks yet from the smiling eyes under the
water there,
Love, where pain and passion are both asleep;—
But the gleam fades, and glides the ship to darkness,
everywhere
So dumb! So deep!

ELLE ET LUI

I WONDER if you know the well-known tale,
Like most true tales, half sad and half absurd,
Of how the stormy pools of love were stirred
By two great children of the Muses, plumed
With crests of genius, that might nought avail
In this one enterprise, nor save them, doomed
To stab of love turned traitor, and the wretch
Of faith uptorn ; two noble figures blurred,
Disguised, theatrical,—and very French.

Are you and I like that ? You never had
Much vision for the ludicrous, and now,
Angrily scornful, you may wonder how
I dare suppose that you,—or even I,—

Could furnish food for laughter in those mad
Past days. Forgive me! One must laugh or cry
When things go ill,—so let me drive a jest
Across our withered harvest, like a plough
Hiding dead stubble in Earth's Autumn breast.

You know De Musset's poems?—tender, sweet,
But overloaded with the sensuous pain
Of sorrow half enjoyed; he lives in vain
And rather likes it;—though a truer tone
Rings, I should fancy, through the stately beat
Of those fine lines wherein he walks alone
With memories of her who held, apart
From all his other loves, imperial reign,
And broke, perhaps, his somewhat brittle heart.

And she had *her* own statement of the case
Whose rights and wrongs are buried now. The thing

Only has power to set me wondering
If delicate, artistic natures feel
Deeply as those nearer to commonplace,
And may not from their own emotion steal
A sense of drama they are looking at,
And find a certain morbid pleasure spring
From parts they play. Are you and I like that?

How hard it is, in these self-conscious days,
To thrust aside that ever-threatening fear.
Even in our laughter are we insincere?
You never cared for laughter much. Perhaps
George Sand was also tuned to serious ways
And knew not self-approval's grim relapse.
But did De Musset see his own shape pass
And not suspect a histrionic sneer,
A presentation of the Tragic Ass?

I know not, care not. In this Autumn time
Each fading leaf, each golden-mantled tree
Such anguish of remembrance bring to me
There is no room for self-analysis
And mocking doubt. I see the great moon climb
Up the dark sky ; I see the sunset kiss
Pine-woods like that you showed me ; I behold
The mist turn purple ; but I do not see
Her who in Autumn walked with me of old.

This is no acting now ;—I wish it were.
I think my powers of make-believe are numb,
And I can only wonder, dazed and dumb,
What has befallen. It is passing strange
That we should still be living and aware
Of thought and breath. Have we not known a
change?

Are we not parted now? And was it *you*
Whose soul across my dream-land used to come
With white feet bathed in love's transparent dew?

I know this obvious world as, in a swoon,
One hears faint voices. But remembrance yields
A far more vivid world of brown, wet fields
And park and garden, and an old walled home
Vague in the dusk beneath the rising moon,—
Or wakes the roar of friendly waves that foam
Under the tall cliff-rampart of the downs,
Where the long slope of lonely silence shields
Our spirits from the taint of hateful towns.

But now am I an exile and may look
No longer on the fair, proud face that pressed
Like a sweet living flower upon my breast,
Nor hear, with you, the husky rustling sea,

Nor watch our evening star. In that closed book
I read no more. Something is gone from me.

I am a shattered idol, and my day
Is over. For the splendour that you dressed
My deprecating soul in, I must pay.

I claimed no halo ; I desired no crown ;
Nor asked to stand upon the pedestal
You reared for me,—though I foretold my fall.
But, judged, condemned, I enter no defence
Nor plead for any softening of your frown.
I cannot even play with the pretence
Of kneeling penitent. Degraded, rough,
Animal,—what you will,—I gave you all
I had to give ;—and it was not enough.

I talk of giving ; think not I forget,—
Dear, lavish heart,—the splendid gift you gave,

Tender and reckless, womanly but brave ;
And I am glad you gave, and cannot feel,
Even now, for that sweet season a regret.
I may have crushed Love's flower with clumsy heel,
But you had cheapened Love before that time,
And though my truth and fervour could not save
Love by my passion stained, you shared the crime.

But I have wandered widely from my text,—
De Musset and George Sand !—I hardly thought
The theme would prove so personal. I ought,
With calm, impartial spirit, to explore
The problem, and forget pale ghosts that vexed
My soul with their reproaches. Nevermore
Can these cold ashes glow with that which fed
The fire within them. Sunny dreams we sought
Fade into joyless gloom. Our love is dead.

Our love is dead. God!—do you understand
What the word means? The happy, trustful ways,
The sweet companionship, the sacred days,
The dedicated thoughts, the emotion shared,
The high hopes guarded, the great labours planned,
And, ah!—the shy, veiled tenderness that dared
To search Love's holiest temple;—all are gone.
Our souls are floating hulks the current frays,
The brine corrodes, the harsh winds beat upon.

Our love is dead.—But, no!—Love cannot die.
Passion is dead,—desire, and hope, and trust.
We both have wrongs to pardon, and the rust
Has gnawed our broken chain beyond repair.
But some small freehold of Eternity
We bought for Love, and proved his title there
With pure and faithful service. We have been

Blinded, befooled,—but not by lies or lust.

Our robes are draggled, but our hearts are clean.

Of small account our few remaining years!

Of small account ourselves, our crippled lives,

Our weary hearts. There is a force that strives

Constant, persistent, through the march of Man,

Feeds on his blood, grows wider with his tears,—

A changeless current since the world began,

A swelling flood time may not turn nor stop.

And what last dew of our dead love survives

Adds to that sacred stream one precious drop.

We may have erred,—but error fades like foam

On banks beyond each rippling eddy's rim.

We may have stumbled,—but the light was dim.

We may have failed,—but Failure has her crown.

Truly we worshipped under Love's great dome

And at His altar laid our rich gifts down.
It may be that our souls shall come to dwell
United, healed, and sanctified, with Him,
The last high Eros.—So, then, fare you well.

MICHAEL ANGELO

WE have little enough of his work, you see.

These two he never finished are all,

Save the canvas there, on the other wall,

Of his paintings ; while for statuary

Some copies in plaster I recall

In our meagre national store of casts ;

We might give them a visit, too, one day.

If the present turn of your fancy lasts,

And you care to steal some hours away

From the round of pleasure that claims your time

For something more sublime.

Pardon my banter ! Your laughing eyes

Cloud with a faint, reproachful shade

At the mocking accusation made.
And the most minute of possible sighs
Creeps through your curved, red lips, afraid
Of its own existence.—“Love of Art
Is a thing that, I please will understand,
Has played in your life a leading part.”
But, though I be reprobate, outcast, banned,
You do *not* belong to the stock, you know,
Of Michael Angelo.

Dear, mirthful woman, daintily fair !
Watteau were likelier, I should guess,
As the guardian-priest of your loveliness.
The very curl and droop of your hair,
Your clothes and your jewels and scent express
Something, as clear as the Master's paint,
Of a graceful, idle, delicate world,

Far from the dreams of Seer and Saint,
Where all the flaring banners are furled,
Where the uglier colours of life have paled,
And human hearts are veiled.

Suspect no critical tone ! I dwell
So much in that self-same world, and take
My part in its pleasure, and rarely break
From its bounds ; for I like it passing well,—
Though I go there mostly for your dear sake.
Are we not lovers—after our kind,
Playing the game as our fellows do,
Sometimes passionate,—never blind,—
Unforgetful,—and fairly true ?
I give my heart—as much as I dare,
And you,—in your strange way,—care.

You, on the whole, are content enough

With your atmosphere, though you may have
laughed

Sometimes at the sparkling wine you quaffed,
Finding it heady, chemical stuff,

And longed, perhaps, for a purer draught.

I shrug my shoulders, and acquiesce

In things that are. I believe the bond
For us is a common weariness,

A light despair of the things beyond.

We meet with laughter the ancient curse,
Knowing it might be worse.

But *he* was a very serious man,

This grim old painter of mighty themes,

Who dwelt apart with eternal dreams,

Working out life on a lonely plan,

And finding it greater than it seems.
He would hardly choose in our world a place
For planting his nature's rugged roots,—
He owned no flavour of drawing-room grace,
And used to sleep, they say, in his boots,
And washed too little, no doubt, and lost
Much that is worth its cost.

But he gained one treasure,—all else above,—
The absorbing purpose, the deathless aim,
The high aspiration ever the same,
Stronger than pleasure, ambition, love,
Lighting his path with a magic flame.
What did he gather that we have missed?
Loneliness? Poverty? Labour?—Dear,
Even the fortunate lips you kissed
Must own to the claim of that life austere.

I would follow,—with you, if the Gods allow,—
If not,—follow anyhow.

For *we* have nothing,—derelicts tossed
On the sea where our captain hopes were
drowned,
Where the winds like taunting voices sound.
You are a mourner for one you lost,
And I for one I have never found.
We owe, as comrades, with truth and faith,
But if love be *all*,—life's total and end,—
Each of us chases a dubious wraith,
Half a lover and half a friend.
The part is no gain if you miss the whole,
Supposing you have a soul.

Ah me! When that plaintive voice of yours
Yields me the song I have loved for years,

I can hear the ceaseless dropping of tears
In the rich voluptuous stream it pours,
And the mask of your laughter disappears.
And I know that your soul imprisoned weeps
For the world that glimmers beyond the bars,
Till the earthlier side of your nature sleeps,
And your thoughts go winging towards the stars,
Looking for Art?—Love?—Some great thing
Dominant while you sing.

For Art and Love are but words, that mean
Something over-profound to contain
In symbols shaped by the human brain,
When once you inhabit that air serene
Where life goes suddenly straight and plain.
This painter here, who had strength to choose
The harder pathway, nor turned aside

For things *we* never could bear to lose,
Knew, in his patient, humble pride,
That he gained them all, in a deeper sense,
Multiplied,—more intense.

But he was abnormal, you object,—
Had genius,—moved by different laws.
It may be. The Universal Cause
Has a very varied wealth of effect,
And life, like glass, whatever its flaws,
Shows the effulgence of light behind,
Save when we wilfully cloak the gleam.
There is a best of every kind,
And each day carries a hidden dream.
How I hunger to make the dream come true,
And share its Heaven with you.

Sweetest woman I ever have known !

I could hate the tyrant passion that clings

To my soul in all its wanderings,

Whose fleshly, fiery meshes are thrown

Round my bedraggled, trailing wings.

Sometimes I wonder if Love be worth

Anguish and effort and thought we give

To the chase, that we make of our life on Earth,

After so cunning a fugitive.

Were it not better, the stern delight

Of this Artist-Anchorite?

More and more, in this daily show,

This pageant of vanity where we walk,

With its greed and its glitter and foolish talk,

My spirit will chafe and my fancies go

From the scavenger-sparrows up to the hawk.

And I feel that an hour is drawing on

When the Voice no more can be disobeyed,

When I shall awake, with the glory gone

From this game in half-delusion played

By beings that know in their inmost hearts

How it irks to act such parts.

And I shall have done with the make-believe,

And bend my footsteps,—alone at first,—

To the wilderness and the dust and the thirst,

And the path where the brambles interweave,

And look for reality,—best or worst.

I shall couch, with a pillow of stony thought,

On the frost-nipped desert of self-control,

And shall buy the knowledge not to be bought

With payment less than a bartered soul.

Of my present treasure nought will I keep

Save laughter,—lest I weep.

But, from time to time, with a growing hope,

A clearer vision, a speech untied,

A passion lifted and purified,

I shall turn, on some moonlit night, and grope

Through the pale obscurity to your side ;

Not in this crowded town, but there

In your memory-haunted garden bowers,

When dew lies white on the grass, and the air

Is richly sweet with the drowsy flowers,

While you are dreaming of loves long past

And delight that did not last.

And, when you kiss me for old time's sake,

I will whisper all that I have to tell

Of the strange new country wherein I dwell,

Where hearts may almost forget to ache,

Where a great love, stronger than Heaven or Hell,

Might hold us, blotting our past desire,

As a feeble thing, from our thoughts, and lead

Our spirits on, to soar, to aspire,

To taste of life that is life indeed.

And, leaving the dead ghosts, frozen, dumb,

I wonder—will you come?

THE GARDEN OF TEARS *

SWEET were you, Fountain, though the name
men gave

Your waters long ago had carried nought
Of heart-ache and heart-rapture ; your clear wave
Gleams through so fair a garden, and has caught
Such tones ; and like a deep and crystal thought
Lies the wide pool you feed. But fancy grows
To fervour o'er your ancient title, fraught

With passion,—“Fountain of the loves” of those
Whose harmonies were played here to their cruel
close.

* Inez de Castro was the mistress, and eventually the wife, of the Infante Pedro, heir to the throne of Portugal. The courtiers of his father, Alfonso IV., were jealous of her influence, and murdered her by the *Fonte dos Amores* in the *Quinta das Lagrimas* at Coimbra.

Drowsy delight it is to sit and dream,
This fair September morning, in the shade
Of branches drooping o'er your dappled stream,
And watch the distant grove of olives fade
In golden blur the noon-day sun has made.
And feel the whole world hushed, and hear the
 chime
From roof to roof of old Coimbra played
In belfries, that repeat their chanted rhyme
Like answering choristers, as wanes the slumbrous
 time.

And, reading stately lines Camoens wrote
Engraved on yonder stone, mine idle brain
Draws from dead centuries the tale remote
That here was staged; and tries to picture plain
Inez, dark-eyed,—perhaps a little vain,

Capricious, passionate,—but ah! so kind,
Aglow with all the sunny blood of Spain,
Weaving her tender bands of love to bind
The fiery Southern Prince whose rough gold she
refined.

And here, beneath the plane-trees, they would
meet,
Sheltered from all the hard world's fretful jar,
For stolen sweetness, ever the most sweet,
For mortal dreams that yet immortal are.
Time, with its pangs and burdens, could not mar
Their perfect trust and fellowship, but crowned
Their fruitful union with the radiant star
Of parenthood, whose rich light wrapped them
round
With that most pure of joys humanity has found.

So, in this vale of tillage, years went on,
A thread of peace across those warlike days,
Vintages gathered, harvests come and gone,
Ripe loads of fruit, and shock-head crops of
maize.

And still Coimbra's hourly chime of praise
Pealed to yon hills where green oak-forests stand,
Marking the eternal Now,—that never stays,—
For all such lovers in this sunburnt land
Where blue Mondego twines dark o'er the yellow
sand.

Then all was ended suddenly by men
Scarce human, who accomplished their vile deed
Here by the Fountain, running crimson then,
On her whose life thwarted somehow their greed.
And with that murder was the passage freed

For wrath and strife and vengeance, fiercely
spread

By Pedro, making a whole nation bleed

In expiation of the dear blood shed,

Till for a while his rage lay sleeping, though not
dead.

Men called him "Cruel" afterwards, because

Her slayers he with lingering torment slew.

By God! I scarcely wonder if he was!

Poor, gentle Inez? It was well for you

To die in days full-blooded, when they knew

Passionate love and hate. Vengeance may be

Of Heaven alone the privilege and due,

Yet no cold modern magnanimity

Could move me like the fire of lovers such
as he.

Ours is another age, and deeds of blood
Seem but a vulgar folly to the wit
Of those that hear the wash of that calm flood,
Civilization,—even when they sit,
As I, in places half-rejecting it
With their unbroken rampart of romance.
And yet our tepid passions barely fit
Into this scene where such hot sunbeams glance
On wavelets with a flash of battle when they dance,

Though formed for meditation and repose,—
This Convent here in bygone days a nest
Of holy womanhood, who gave the rose
And kept the thorn,—thinking that God knew
best,—

And those grey courts and cloisters on the breast
Of yonder hill, where generations pass

The lamp of learning on, a sacred quest,—
The cool, dark garden-paths, the sunlit grass,—
Must human discord break their harmonies, alas !

Well, life is life ! He, though no suffering saint,
At least could love. There was a later scene
The kindest fancy could not fear to paint,
When he, now Monarch, gave so strange a queen
To Lusitania as had never been ;—
The weird Court held at night, in torchlit gloom,
Where he sat throned, and, at his side, serene
In the mysterious beauty of her doom,
Dead Inez, robed and crowned, a consort from the
tomb.

And dazed, bewildered courtiers had to come
And bow before the sceptred corpse, and pay

Homage to her enthroned there, dreadful, dumb,
A statue modelled of no sculptor's clay,
A Something, present, yet so far away,
Gazing upon them with her dull, dead eyes,
That mocked this earthly pomp and proud
array,
Scornful in their oblivion, strangely wise,
Seeing beyond all fear and sorrow and surprise.

Well-guarded passions played amid that throng
Of high grandees and women nobly born,—
Resentment for some unrequited wrong,
Regret for bitter deeds and hearts forlorn,
Envy and lust, ambition, anger, scorn,
With love and hope, were wafted round the
throne
Of That, wherein all passions were outworn,

All joys forgotten, all desires unknown,—
Eternally apart,—infinitely alone.

The gruesome mockery of pomp at last
Was over, and one seems to know the sense
Of vague relief that lightened souls aghast
With half-admiring horror, too intense
For long endurance, when they bore her thence
Through multitudes of mourners and the flare
Of countless torches, whose magnificence
Filled the vast night and sent a haunting glare
Across the land, to tell of love and great despair.

And nobly so they carried her to sleep
At Alcobaça, among buried kings.
Now she adorns a legend. But how deep
Are planted roots of old romantic things !

In this calm garden the remembrance wrings
My bosom with compassion, and I know
These lovers and can hear their whisperings
Through the light murmur of the Fountain's
flow,—

Till sweetly, softly fades this dream of long ago.

A SUBURBAN JUNCTION

UNDER the new-lit lamps the sloppy platform gleams

While murky smoke and dripping vapour blend
To make a twilight foul as fever-blackened dreams,
Veiling the huddled row of sheds the station seems,
The aggressive, hideous foot-bridge at the end.

The coloured signals blink, the streaks of metal
shine,

Far down the dingy track beneath the rain.
Scene have I never viewed less noble, less divine,
As, past the staring throng, I scan the distant line
To seek the late and long-expected train.

In sudden, fierce revolt rises my angered blood
Against the vulgar ugliness of things,
Against the cancerous town, the smells, the din, the
mud,
The crawling, teeming life, the plants that never
bud,
The birds that cannot spread their crippled
wings ;

Against the myriad folk like this dull group
around,
With bulging, wet umbrellas, dreary clothes ;
Against their narrow lives, their object never found,
Their virtues and their vice by cramped convention
bound,
Their songs, their tears, their laughter, and
their oaths.

But dies the thought in shame, and comes a rushing

sense

Of humble, inconsolable appeal,

Of hot desire to learn the wherefore and the

whence,

To shape this broken pulp of nonsense into sense,

The heart beneath the noise to hear and feel.

This brickwork, bare and blank, these ill-propor-

tioned walls,

These roofs with all the slopes and angles

wrong,

Hold an imprisoned voice that, wordless, pleading,

calls,

Sustain mute echoes where some ghostly footstep

falls,

And cage unsung the sweetness of a song.

Who could not point you now each different
Muse's home,

Where all poetic thought must come to birth?

With measurement and rule, in many a learned
tome,

Has Culture everywhere, from Kensington to
Rome,

Serenely taught the world her beauty's worth.

Poetic pilgrims turn their feet towards the lands

Which Art, by long succession, makes her
own,

Where all may find the clay half-moulded to their
hands,

And hear a language talked the dullest understands,
And know what those dead mighty ones have
known.

Ah, but I love you well, dear countries of Romance,
With all your garnered mystery of Time,—
Vineyard and olive-grove, folk-song and sunburnt
dance,
Sea-plunder and crusade, sceptre and harp and lance,
The carillon of centuries a-chime !

Well might I care to tread the path by poets trod,
And wanton with old memories and dreams,—
Dryad, and laughing Faun, and happy pagan God,
The wondrous world whose life obeyed the
Olympian nod,
And Tempe, and the pure Thessalian streams.

Sweet would it be to tell the testaments again
That men from other, greater lips have read,
To sing for them once more the haunting old
refrain,

To picture scenes beloved and witcheries made
plain,

And visions more than half interpreted.

But, as a symbol there, the grimy girders rest,

Like lattice-work, against the blank abyss,

Time's virgin Epigram, Destiny's cryptic jest.

Past prophets have revealed the wonder of the rest,

But who can tear the secret out of *this*?

Oh, Soul of Beauty, chained and captive under all!

Where is the fairy Prince to set you free

From these grim fetters forged of rail and roof and
wall?

Gas-works and chimney-stacks, mud-stain and
smoky pall

Hide you from eyes that have not learned to
see.

But faithful hearts may find your Temple every-
where.

So let me make this halting-place a shrine,
Pour out libations meet on this strange altar-stair,
And through this chancel harsh breathe from my
soul a prayer
For insight, changing squalid to divine.

Could I but sing the words branded,—an unknown
tongue,—

Oh yonder soiled and tattered page, ere long
The weary world would dream of old things ever
young,
And hearts, that have not stirred when other notes
were sung,
Would waken, and be thankful for the song.

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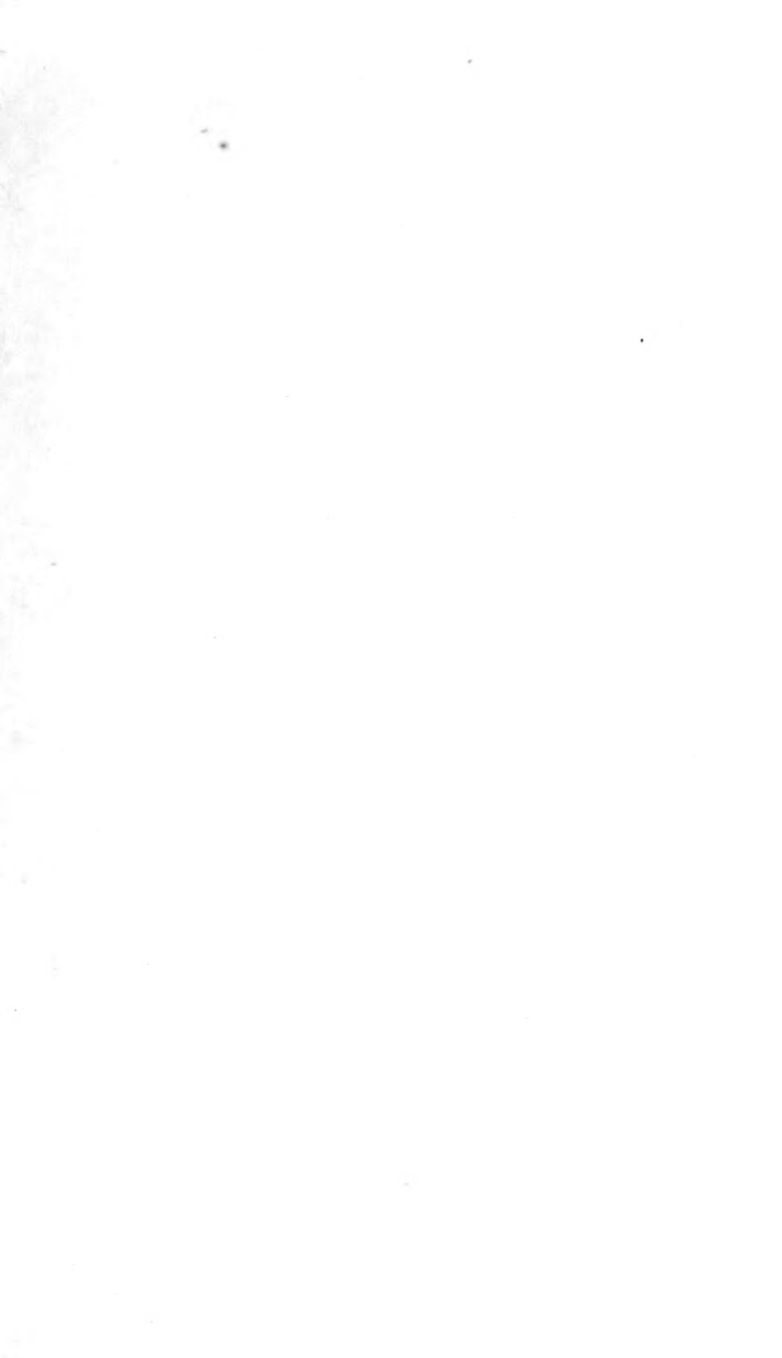
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